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Practical Farmers of Iowa Announces Savings Incentive Recipients

AMES, IOWA — Practical Farmers of Iowa has accepted an additional 25 beginning farmers into its Savings Incentive Program. This program, created to help beginning farmers succeed, now has 35 participants; Practical Farmers of Iowa plans to enroll 100 beginning farmers in the program over the next four years.

The Savings Incentive Program is designed to encourage the next generation of farmers to make regular deposits into a savings account for their future farm development. Upon program completion, Practical Farmers of Iowa will match their savings dollar for dollar up to \$2,400 so recipients will have \$4,800 to use toward a business purchase. The savings match is only a small component of the program. Participants also learn valuable farm and business skills by being matched with a farmer mentor, attending field days, workshops and webinars, and completing a business plan.

Iowa native and beginning farmer Kate Edwards recently returned to the state to begin her vegetable farming career near Solon. "I have been so encouraged by multiple conversations with PFI members, farm visits and PFI field days," she says. "Being involved in a deeper way with the PFI community through the requirements of this program will make a significant impact on my development as a farmer and the development of the farm. The financial aspect of this program will enable me to purchase a hoop house for season extension."

Beginning farmers taking advantage of this program are diverse in farm location and enterprise. Of the 25 new enrollees, 14 are producing fruits and vegetables, eight are raising row crops, six are raising beef cattle, four are raising poultry, four are raising sheep, two are growing herbs, one has meat goats, two operate a dairy and one raises niche pork. The 25 new Savings Incentive Program participants are:

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Brian Bagge, Worthington; Thomas Burkhead, Rockwell City; Jordan Clasen, Des Moines; Chris Corbin, Nevada; Betsy Dahl, Rolfe; Luke Dahl, Rolfe; Kate Edwards, Solon; Glen Elsbernd, Calmar; Karla Hanson, Monona; Morgan Hoenig, Mt. Pleasant; Cheryl and Mike Hopkins, Walker; Jay Jung, Colwell; Drew Lietz, Pocahontas; Brian and Cheryl Ness, Newton; Jacob Petersen, Knoxville; Ellen and Daniel Rosmann, Harlan; Mike Salama, Boone; Jordan Scheibel, Grinnell; Dave Schmidt, Garwin; Luke and Linsey Schuldt, Tripoli; Grant and Adam Schultz, Eldridge; Michael von Weihe, Carson; Jake and Amber Wheeler, Monroe; Erin Wilson, Paullina; and Ben Wise, Lytton. To view profiles of Savings Incentive Program recipients, visit http://practicalfarmers.org/programs/youth-and-next-generation/SIP_recipients2012.html

Savings Incentive Program recipients were selected by a panel of Practical Farmers of Iowa members through an application process. Panelist Sean Skeeahan says, "As a member of the panel that selects SIP participants from a large number of applications, I am impressed that many of the diverse applicants equally value the opportunity to work with professionals and mentors developing ideas into strong business plans *as well as* the matching dollar component of the program."

Applicants are required to live or farm in Iowa, be members of Practical Farmers of Iowa, be farming now, and have farmed for five or fewer year. Practical Famers of Iowa will accept applications for a third round of enrollees in the fall of 2012. If you have questions about the Savings Incentive Program, please contact Sally Worley, 515.232.5661, sally@practicalfarmers.org.

The Savings Incentive Program is part of Practical Farmers of Iowa's Next Generation Program, which offers a group of almost 600 beginning farmers opportunities to network and learn from each other and experienced farmers through field days, Farminars, workshops, retreats and other events.

Practical Farmers of Iowa set a goal to raise \$250,000 to provide savings matches to 100 beginning farmers. Through generous donations from individuals and companies dedicated to helping the next generation of Iowa farmers succeed as well as a grant from the Assets for Independence program of the Department of Human Services, Practical Farmers of Iowa has exceeded its goal, raising more than \$298,000. Educational aspects of this program are made possible through the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, USDA, Grant # 2010-49400-21843.

Founded in 1985, Practical Farmers of Iowa is an open, supportive and diverse organization of farmers and friends of farmers, advancing profitable, ecologically sound and community-enhancing approaches to agriculture through farmer-to-farmer networking, farmer-led investigation and information sharing. Farmers in our network produce corn, soybeans, beef cattle, hay, fruits and vegetables, and more. For additional information, call 515.232.5661 or visit www.practicalfarmers.org.

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Cutline: Iowa native and beginning farmer Kate Edwards recently returned to the state to begin her vegetable farming career near Solon. Kate is one of 25 new beginning farmers to be selected to participate in the Practical Farmers of Iowa Savings Incentive Program.